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LCPI WORK AT LAKE CHAMPLAIN: 1982

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INTRODUCTION

Members of the Lake Champlain Investigation (LCPI) once again worked at Lake Champlain during 1982 in an attempt to identify its presumed colony of large unknown animals. The lake is the supposed habitat of 15- to 30-foot-long unidentified animals whose descriptions closely resemble those of the Loch Ness animals. These mysterious animals of Lake Champlain are popularly referred to as "Champ," "Champy," the Lake Champlain Monster, and the Lake Champlain Sea Serpent, and have been reported since the lake was discovered by Samuel de Champlain in 1609.

More evidence was gathered in 1982 by the LCPI, thus providing more pieces towards the completion of this zoological jigsaw puzzle. However, the conclusive puzzle fragments still await cryptzoological collection, analysis, and assemblage.

Lake Champlain is located on the border between the U.S. states of Vermont and New York and its northern tip enters the Canadian province of Quebec. It is "the largest of the deep, cold water, and near-oligotrophic lakes in the United States with the exception of the Great Lakes" (see Glenn E. Myer and Gerhard K. Greundling, *Limnology of Lake Champlain,* Burlington, Vermont, 1979). The lake is 109 miles long, 11 miles at its maximum width, has a maximum depth of 400 feet, has 440 square miles of surface water area, and has 587 miles of shoreline (see Lake Champlain Basin Study, *Lake Champlain Atlas: Water Quality and Shoreland Use,* Boston, Mass., 1978).

During 1982, 31 days of fieldwork were completed by members of the LCPI at Lake Champlain. Added to this 30-day total was a week and a half of sonar surveying by the Rochester Engineering Laboratories of Fairport, New York. The Rochester Engineering Laboratories are associated with the LCPI.

The principal LCPI researchers and field participants during the 1982 year were Joseph W. Zarzynski and M. Pat Meaney. Zarzynski (director of the LCPI) has researched the problem since 1974. Meaney, an LCPI associate, has participated in LCPI field operations since 1981. The three other associate members of the LCPI, Scott Hill, Jack Sullivan and Jim Kennard (president of the Rochester Engineering Laboratories), periodically participated in LCPI fieldwork during 1982.

FIG. 1.—Crown Point Bridge, near the southern end of Lake Champlain, where there is a monument to its discoverer, Samuel de Champlain, who first reported the "monster."

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The 31 days of LCPI field operations consisted of camera monitoring from shoreline and vessel, sonar searches, and related scuba dives into Lake Champlain.

Lake surface surveillance was conducted at such places as: Kimball Dock Pier, Vermont; Potash Bay, Vermont; Split Rock Point, New York; near Crown Point Bridge, New York/Vermont (Fig. 1); Button Bay, Vermont; and along other shoreside sites. Camera watches involved the use of still and motion picture photography with long-range lenses. Camera watching sessions were conducted during daylight from both shoreline vantage sites and from vessels. The 31 days of lake surveillance, sonar work, and scuba monitoring sessions were: April 28, May 13, May 25, May 30, June 4–5, June 11–13, June 26–July 3, July 16–18, July 24–31, September 2, and September 11–12. During some of this time, sonar and scuba operations were conducted.

The sonar and scuba monitoring complemented LCPI lake surface surveillance. Moreover, extensive interview sessions of eyewitnesses and related research were undertaken throughout 1982 as part of an ongoing investigation by the LCPI.

FIG. 2.—Joseph Zarzynski (left) and Pat Meaney about to conduct diving operations off Button Island, on the Vermont side of the lake.

In 1979, Jim Kennard donated the use of his Rochester Engineering Laboratories side-scan sonar (100 kHz). In 1980, Kennard and Zarzynski introduced another sonar unit, a modified Raytheon DE725C, which was affixed to a 4½-foot tripod (200 kHz) and placed on the lake's bottom for sonar data collection. The tripod was designed and constructed by the Rochester Engineering Laboratories. (Similar side-scan sonar and modified Raytheon units have been employed by the Academy of Applied Science during its work at Loch Ness, Scotland.)

Scuba diving forays have also played an important role in LCPI field operations. Sonar targets tracked by the towed side-scan sonar unit were often investigated by scuba teams. Also, a two-diver scuba team was used to deploy the modified Raytheon unit affixed onto its aluminum tripod, and placed on the lake's bottom to monitor for large, unknown moving targets.

Sixteen dives were made in 1982 into Lake Champlain by Zarzynski and/or Meaney, often with support personnel (Fig. 2). Of these dives, seven were specifically for reconnaissance and for laying/retrieving of the Raytheon sonar tripod. The other nine dives were primarily related to underwater archaeological projects, with secondary searches for cryptozoological evidence. Members of the Rochester Engineering Laboratories also conducted several diving sessions into the lake. LCPI associate Jack Sullivan also participated in four Lake Champlain scuba dives with Zarzynski.

The LCPI's field strategy consisted of both daylight surface surveillance utilizing cameras/binoculars, and an underwater search featuring sonar and scuba expeditions.

Results

While several intriguing surface objects were noted during our surface surveillance, only one can be labeled as a "possible" Champ sighting. This "possible" Champ sighting occurred on July 16, 1982. The unidentified surface object was seen in the late afternoon just south of Thompson's Point, in Vermont waters, at an estimated range of three-quarters to 1 mile from observers Meaney and Zarzynski. However, the July 16th "sighting" must be categorized as inconclusive due to the range and the lack of noticeable features on the object.

LCPI sonar expeditions did not track any target within either the sidescan sonar or the Raytheon units' fields that might have indicated a possible Champ animal.

However, on May 1, 1982, a Champ surface sighting by a Vermont citizen, from his houseboat, did produce an interesting sonar anomaly from his own depth sounder/fish-finder sonar unit. This occurred just after the unknown animal submerged, with the houseboat then passing over the area. This sonar anomaly is currently being investigated by the LCPI and other technicians in order to ascertain if it might be Champ-related.

The LCPI was also successful in obtaining a number of new Champ sighting reports. As of this writing, seven 1982 Champ reports have been collected. To date, a total of 168 Champ sightings have been cataloged. A brief summary of these seven 1982 sightings is outlined below:

—May 1, 1982: Raymond W. Sargent, from his houseboat, near Treadwell Bay; head and neck seen at a range of about 150 yards.

—May 8, 1982: Several eyewitnesses at a roadside point saw a grayish-black, 20-foot-long object off Port Henry, New York.

—May 30, 1982: While motoring in their yacht, two Vermonters saw a dark-brown creature estimated to be 30–50 feet long with a 1–2-foot-high head and neck; range was about 40–50 feet from their boat, near Four Brothers Islands.

—July 19, 1982: Claude Van Kleeck and several other eyewitnesses saw a 45- to 50-foot-long blackish-gray animal with an eel-like head off Port Henry, New York; range was about 100–150 yards.

—August 1, 1982: Two police officers from Rouses Point, New York, saw a 20-foot-long animate object off Rouses Point; the animal's head was visible.

—August 5, 1982: Three people saw a "big black animal, like a huge snake with three humps" in Kings Bay, Rouses Point, New York; the animate object was seen to ram a moored sailboat as it was leaving the bay for the deeper waters of Lake Champlain; range was about 100 yards.

—Autumn, 1982: Mrs. Cathy Cooper saw "three distinct humps out of the water . . . no head or tail" off Rouses Point, New York; seen by two other Rouses Point eyewitnesses later that same day near the same place as Mrs. Cooper's sighting.

Future Plans

The LCPI intends to continue field operations at Lake Champlain using similar methods as used in 1982. However, future LCPI expeditions may use second generation night-vision gear to maximize lake surface surveillance observations. Besides fieldwork, the LCPI will continue historical research on Champ, will continue to interview Champ eyewitnesses, will strive to further educate the public and the scientific community about the Champ animals, and will work towards identifying and protecting this supposed colony of unknown animals in Lake Champlain.